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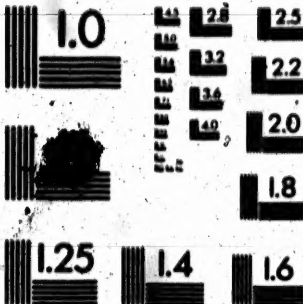
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AN OPEN LETTER

— TO THE —

PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH ASSOCIATION OF THE
DIOCESE OF TORONTO.

Sir.—As the organization over which you preside is the only one in Canada, of which I have any knowledge, having for its object the conserving the principles of the English Reformation, I find myself constrained to address this open letter to you, and through you to Protestant Episcopal Churchmen throughout North America, who allow themselves to be called by, and take pride in the name of "Protestants."

Under other circumstances, I would have addressed these serious and free thoughts on the present state of the Church, and Religion in the Protestant Episcopal Church in Canada and the United States, to the Bishops; but there are special reasons why I cannot do so, and these are manifested in the thoughts which I here attempt to convey.

The complexion of the times is such as Bishop Hall foresaw when he penned these lines, "There needs no prophetic spirit to discern by a small cloud that there is a storm coming towards our Church; such a one as shall not only drench our plumes but shake our peace, already do we see the sky thicken, and hear the winds whistle hollow afar off, and feel all the presages of a tempest. I see every man ready to rank himself unto a side, and to draw in the quarrel he affecteth. I see no man thrusting himself between them, and either holding or joining their

hands in peace. This good, however thankless, office, I have here boldly undertaken, showing how unjustly we are divided, and by what means we may be made and kept entire. Let it be no disparagement to so important a motion that it falls from so mean a hand."

When we find Bishops, and those who would be Bishops of the Church, ranking themselves in hostile array *"unto a side and draw in the quarrel which is going on,"* and has been raging for these forty years past, when we find amongst them and other presbyters of the Church a determination to throw off the principles of the Reformers and lay aside the Scriptural character of the Articles of the Church;—When we find such men as "*Thureros*" and "*Ilfracombe*" wrangling and coming to an open contention through the public press as to what doctrines the Church does or does not teach; When we see a Presbyter of the Church openly declare if he could be convinced that the Church holds the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, he would leave her pale and ministry forever, and then when shown incontestible proof of it which no candid mind could resist, inconstantly quit the field *conquished*, but still remain, like a *Stone* in a wall, clinging to the loaves and fishes;—When we see a Presbyter elected to the office of

Bishop, submit to a popish ceremonial which involves adherence to the dogma of apostolical succession which he has presumably denied, and which the party with whom he has been identified in the church repudiates. When we hear of a Bishop preaching a sermon trying to make out the identity of the Christian ministry with the sacrificing priesthood, under the Jewish economy, and assert that the Christian priesthood has been in existence over three thousand years! and have the audacity to utter the following Popish sentiments, "The Apostolic Church" (does he mean the Church of Rome!) "was not moulded into shape according to any scriptural definition, but on the contrary, the Scripture itself needed the evidence and approval of the Church before it could have any authority as declaratory of the will of God" and again "the writing of the New Testament was not the cause of the spread of Christianity, or of the organization of the Church, but was the effect of both. Indeed on the supposition that the sacred books were composed for that purpose, we must see that they have utterly failed of this object. The reading of them (the Scriptures) to find out rules of guidance forming Churches, has resulted in a multitude of contradictory sects, all however claiming to be Scriptural Churches." I am led to ask "whither are you drifting?" I am induced to believe that Bishop Hall's "small cloud" is already larger than a man's hand, and that it is not "coming towards," but is already in the church, and has sadly drenched the plumes and shaken the

peace of its members. Truly the sky has "thickened"—the winds are whistling hollow—not "afar off"; but the tempest is *within*; every man has "ranked himself unto a side" and the Bishops are amongst them.

There has been lately a vacancy in the Episcopate of Montreal, there is now by the decease of the late revered Bishop, a vacancy in the Diocese of Toronto. The first has been filled by the election of a Presbyter dearly beloved, in every way suited for the office. How the second is to be filled who shall say?

I have thought the occasion a fitting one to draw the attention of all Protestant Episcopal churchmen to the insincerity and inconsistency of the so called *Evangelical* Clergy and Lay members who so loudly complain of the sad state of the Church, and so constantly reprobate the *dishonest conduct* and *ritualistic practices* of those they themselves call "brethren," and I ask them through this letter to let their consciences determine "if they are not *themselves chargeable with similar conduct*!"

It has been the habit of a much revered Bishop of the American Church, (now gone to his rest) to make the remark—which was the key note of most of his platform speeches in which the church was concerned—"Before you can get priestcraft out of the Church you must take the priest out of the prayer book!" And Sir, before your Society or the Church in Canada or the United States, can expect that the principles of the English Reformation will be revived in their midst, that "stumbling block" must be removed which

stands in the way of many true church men, and which has driven many sincere Christians out of its pale. If they oppose, as they have hitherto steadfastly done, all attempts looking to the revision of the prayer book, then it were useless to undertake or expect a reform within the Church: That both are required, no sincere student of the subject can be will attempt to deny. Nothing can be effected by not answering fairly and ingenuously the arguments now pressed upon them for reform, and refusing either to listen to arguments or be instructed, does but exhibit a spirit of hopeless bigotry and folly. If they are determined not to yield to evidence, as the Rev. Mr. Stone has done; If they cannot answer the arguments pressed upon them, but obstinately persevere in the error of their way; they must not be surprised that the exodus towards other Christian Churches, on the part of thinking members, still continues, notwithstanding that Mr. Stone holds his ground; for men of intelligence do not like to be pointed at as long suffering sheep under the tutelage of designing priests; devouring shepherds, blind guides leading them astray, nor must they be hurt if others should judge of *their* integrity as *they* judge of the integrity of their so called "brethren."

I have no hope whatever that many of the ministers of the Evangelical School will yield or consent to a revision of the prayer book, or acknowledge their conviction that the root of all present evils (apart from the articles of religion) rests mainly in that compendium which has been handed down in a

mutilated form. Indeed I am firmly persuaded that all effectual reformation will ever be strenuously opposed by the great body of the Evangelical clergy, and by very many of the laity, to say nothing of the High Church and ritualistic clergy. In proof of this feeling let me mention two instances, of which there are innumerable similar ones. The late Bishop Eastburn, of the American Church, an Englishman and a most pronounced Evangelical, publicly declared with reference to a revision of the Book of Common Prayer that he would never consent to dot an i or cross a t in that Book by way of alteration or amendment, and since his death the vacancy in his Diocese has been filled by the election and consecration of a Ritualistic Bishop—the natural sequel of such a declaration—and a Canon of the Diocese of Huron in a sermon preached by him some two years ago, declared that notwithstanding his Evangelical principles he "*would not altar one word of the Prayer Book.*" The same individual some fifteen years ago, declared that rather than keep the germs of Popery as they exist in the Book of Common Prayer, would, if necessary, "*do away with the Liturgy altogether.*"—it must be understood however that he was *lower* then than he is now—he was not a Canon. *He has now stepped up higher*, but as I have already said these are not exceptional people. There are thousands of such in the United States and Canada.

Indeed I can not see how, or where, or through whom the reform is to commence, or the evils to end.

It was said by a learned divine of the present century—and it is *apropos* still, "All classes of the clergy seem to have settled on their *jeu*, men who hold, who preach, and who publish the most contradictory sentiments, from the high Calvinist down to the Unitarian, find no difficulty in giving their 'unfeigned assent and consent to the same articles,' " (albeit some of them preach doctrines diametrically opposed to them) "and from the conduct of the *sacred order* in the present instance, an inhabitant of the heathen lands might be led to imagine that prevarication and hypocrisy so far from being considered, as they have been in all civil communities, enormous crimes, were in the communion of the Protestant Episcopal Church, deemed *cardinal virtues*. Arguments in themselves (as those of "*Thauracos*") the most convincing and powerful appear to have no weight against such a system, supported as they are by ecclesiastical prejudices and interests (as in the case of "*Ilfracombe*") "that omnipotent voice, which can awaken the dead, and that voice only can awaken the Church of England, and her daughter the P. E. Church of U. S., from that deep, awful and apparently fatal lethargy into which she is so unhappily sunk."

I do not purpose in my limited space to go over all the available defects of the Book of Common Prayer, or to point out wherein in every respect it needs revision; they are *few* I admit, but so *important*, that, seeing all the theories of our Ritualistic and Sacramentarian friends are built upon

them,—I insist upon the need of revision; I speak not of the articles of Religion in so far as they set forth doctrines, I would leave *them* untouched—but I refer chiefly to the *offices*:—and here I will allude to two in particular.

The daily press of the cities, published amongst other things connected with the recent consecration of the Bishop of Montreal, that the senior Bishop in laying on his hands used these words "Receive the holy ghost for the office and work of a Bishop in the Church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands" &c. &c., now what assumption is here! how easily available is the Bishop who assumes to confer this gift! and how questionable are the principles of the Presbyter whose whole ministerial career has been presumably marked by a denial of the possibility of any human being, since the apostles, having the power to confer such a gift. This ceremony and the use of these words involve a maintaining in its most hideous and blasphemous form, the so called doctrine of the "Apostolic succession," which your professing Evangelicals (notably Dean Grassett) deny;—how is this, Mr. President! what does the Church Association say to this!—and let me remark here before we go further, that in ordaining Priests, the Bishop assumes to impart the gift of the Holy Ghost, for he says (the "*receivers*" humbly kneeling) "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained" &c., and when a Presbyter or Priest comes to

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he made a Bishop or Archbishop he must of necessity receive the Holy Ghost again for the Archbishop and Bishops present lay their hands upon the head of the elected Bishop, the Archbishop saying "Receive the Holy Ghost &c., as hereafter shown.

We are on the Eve of an Episcopal election in the Diocese of Toronto, a crisis for the Church is about to ensue on the death of Bishop Bethune. Provost Whittaker will probably be the nominee of a party as he has been already. Dean Grassie may be the nominee of the other party. Neither of them may be elected, and a *compromise man* may be found who will not exactly please either party, but my word for it, Mr. President, let whoever may be elected, whether the Provost or the Dean, or the compromise man (either of them) will kneel down as Bishop Bond did, and will submit to have the words set forth in column I, which I now append, and *either* of them would start up in surprise were the words used, which I append in column II, for they would feel that some part had been left out.

COLUMN I.

Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Bishop in the Church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. And remember that thou stir up the Grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands

COLUMN II.

Take thou authority to execute the office and work of a Bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. *Proposed Prayer Book, (1689.)*

for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love of soberness.

Ch. of Eng. Pr. Book.

You may ask Sir, "What would you have done in the circumstances? Where is your remedy?" We must have Bishops consecrated, or drop the Episcopal character of our Church." I reply Sir, it is not an essential of Episcopacy to have the finger of contempt pointed at her by her enemies, or for the consecrating Bishops discharging Episcopal functions to say that which involves nothing short of Popish assumption and open blasphemy, and no expediency or reason can be justifiable which will not justify those who use them, to the face of God, and whatever is *wrong* should be dropped at once.

I maintain, Sir, that the offices for ordering of priests and consecration of Bishops in the Church involves nothing short of *open blasphemy* in all who take part in these ceremonies, and in the words of the author from whom I have already quoted:—"Christianity as it is professed and practised by our Bishops purports to impart to all its bishops a power to give the Holy Ghost—and to all the priests, through their hands—it gives authority to forgive or retain the sins, which men commit against the majesty and laws of heaven; and which divines have taught us is ever to be considered as the greatest of all evils, far more to be dreaded than poverty, sickness, pain or death. This appears to have been the sentiment of mankind in all ages of the world."

"Morinus, a learned priest, has published sixteen of the most ancient rituals or forms of ordination, used in the Church from the earliest ages of Christianity in which any such are found. In the several changes and additions under which these forms have successively passed it is seen how the spirit of superstition gradually wrought its way into the minds of the clergy, and how Sacrodotialism asserted its accursed sway." (*Vide Ordin. Sacr.* See A Vindication of the Ordination of the Church of England, by Bishop Burnet, printed 1688). "Every age added some ridiculous rite or some extravagant claim to the inventions of the former, till it grew to the present enormous mass of the Roman pontifical. It is peculiarly worthy of attention, says my author, "that in not one of the first fifteen rituals, from the first to the fifteenth century, does the form now used 'Receive the Holy Ghost,' appear. It is the last only, the sixteenth (which Morinus takes to be but about three hundred years old) which assumes to itself this power. Yea amidst the pride and intoxication of this corrupted state of the Church, so much sense and modesty seem still to have remained, that this extravagant claim was not universally admitted, for" (the learned priest observes) "that in two other pontificals of the same age this form, 'Receive the Holy Ghost' &c., was not found."

And still, Mr. President, in the Reformed Church of England, in the P. E. Church in the United States, and the so called branch of it in this free land, this extravagant and anti-protes-

tant pretension is openly avowed and adopted, which the Church of Rome corrupt as it always has been, amidst all her pride, wantonness and superstition, never presumed to make from the fifth to the twelfth century. Yea Sir, this noxious weed which sprang up, like the Canada thistle, and many other hurtful things, from the most corrupted state which the papacy ever saw is not only received but adopted and practised in these enlightened, these reformed, these noble parts of the Christian vineyard, and is suffered by your Evangelical Deans, Canons and Bishops to take root and flourish. May God in his mercy awaken a spirit of integrity and a better mind; a spirit of fortitude and forbearance in all whom it may concern, and wipe off this stigma from these churches of the Reformation; from the Christian name, this deep scandal and reproach which it unrighteously suffers!

It was with prophetic spirit that a very learned and worthy prelate expressed a wish "that something were done to convince the world that the clergy of the Church are not averse to a reformation of some part of her public service; since otherwise they may give offence by their obstinacy and assumed infallibility: and if a storm should arise, may run a risk of having the tree torn up by the roots, which they might have saved by a little pruning.

This prelatical assumption, this heretical imposture should have been condemned in the XXII article of Religion; to amplify which only a little,—it might well have declared "The Romish doctrine concerning . . . The pre-

tended Apostolic succession and Bishops assuming to confer the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands is a frivolous and fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God." The Bishop of Oxford asserted "All this is the most blasphemous frivolity, if it be not the deeper truth." Who, Mr. President, has the hardihood to assert that its truth has a *little of foundation in Scripture*? if it has, why did not the Bishop say so?

Fisher writes "There is an assumption of spiritual power amply sufficient, not only to countenance, but even to justify the most extravagant claims that any priesthood, whether Roman or Anglican has ever hitherto advanced."

At one of the meetings of your Association, it was said by a beloved minister, now deceased, "I am not going to quit the ship because there are monkeys in the rigging," but, Mr. President, it is well known, the monkeys are not merely in the *rigging*, they are all over, in every part, they have hold of the helm, they steer and they engineer the whole movements of the ship, and they would effectually block all attempts at a Revision; if you wish to have things tant and safe you must throw them overboard, never mind drowning them, they are only monkeys, the Emisaries of Rome can easily pick them up, for they are already in league with, and will be on the lookout for them.

It was a proverb of the Reformation "If you want to get rid of the rooks, cut down the trees," and I am prepared now to propose a similar remedy. I say, "Revise the Prayer Book," for the

popish germs of that compendium are the rookery in which those black crows are sheltered, they are the rigging which the monkeys cling to. Expurgate all things on which doubts are hung, erase all frivolities and unscriptural pretensions which impose upon that credulity and ignorance of the people which are only equalled by the wickedness and impostures of the clergy. Most of the Laymen who remain in the church do not know of, and do not care for the existence of Romish germs. Some of those who do care, bear the evil with impatience, and stay unhappily where they are, or leave the fold like stray sheep having no shepherds, to unite themselves with Evangelical and more scriptural churches, whose shepherds feed instead of devour their flocks, and this accounts for the non-growth of the Protestant Episcopal, and for the great increase of other churches in our land, and for our own corresponding diminuant numbers.

Truly, Sir, in this land when we look at the growth of the denominations, of other religious bodies around us, when we see the influence they wield in the community, their missions at home and abroad, and look at our own poor stunted vine, when we see their prosperous and increasing mission funds and their unity of purpose and action, and the waning influence of the Church of England in Canada, and the P. E. Church in the U. S. amongst the masses; the failing mission fund and unsupplied mission fields, wanting missionaries, the monies subscribed for missionary purposes diverted by a *pious fraud* from the prosecuting of missions to the support

AN OPEN LETTER.

settled favorites who belong to the so-called orthodox party,— we may fear that the tree is past *pruning*, that neither watering, nor pruning nor digging around it will do it good, and we may expect that some convulsive storm will shiver it into splinters, root, body and branches, for the sap will soon cease to flow—and life must become extinct.

Mr. President, the *Christianity* of the Church of England, and the P. E. Church in the U. S. is such that could not exist in any other communion, or branch of the *Protestant* Church, for there is a *schism* amongst her membership, parties hostile to her success stay inside and mar her progress,—quarrel and wangle and contend one against the other, one claims *orthodoxy*, on the Ritual, and repels the articles of Religion although subscribed by ALL ; the other claims orthodoxy on the articles of Religion and repels the ritualistic practices of the other. In any other Church one of these factions must, *perforce*, go out ; they could not exist together within ; but in the Church of England and the P. E. Church, cabals and factions and heterodox principles are within their vaunted “comprehensiveness ;” and so *their Christianity* is ridiculed, is despised, is railed at and reviled with very little stint, and they are a laughing stock of the

churches for they are in *schism*. Yes, Sir, these churches are in *schism*—(that is divided against themselves) in danger from the Protestant Antichrist under all its diversified forms. Much may be done for their safety and entire security, but nothing short of a revision of the Prayer Book will do it, failing that, sooner or later, (it would be only a question of time) there must be a *second Reformation* ; even if regulated by nothing better than an adherence to the plainer dictates of common sense and the received maxims of human prudence. All might be done if under the severe control and dictates of Christian principle. If that did not succeed they would at least fall with dignity and honor, it would be a Spiritual not a worldly sacrifice, and when the Churches were *thus* fallen, they would not present to the Christian world a worse aspect than they now occupy. Their worst enemies, Papists, Infidels and Tractarians, would not be better pleased than they are by the present bickerings and strife of their members, they might indeed be constrained to weep over the wreck.

I am, Mr. President,

with great respect

Yours truly,

JOHN RILAND.

